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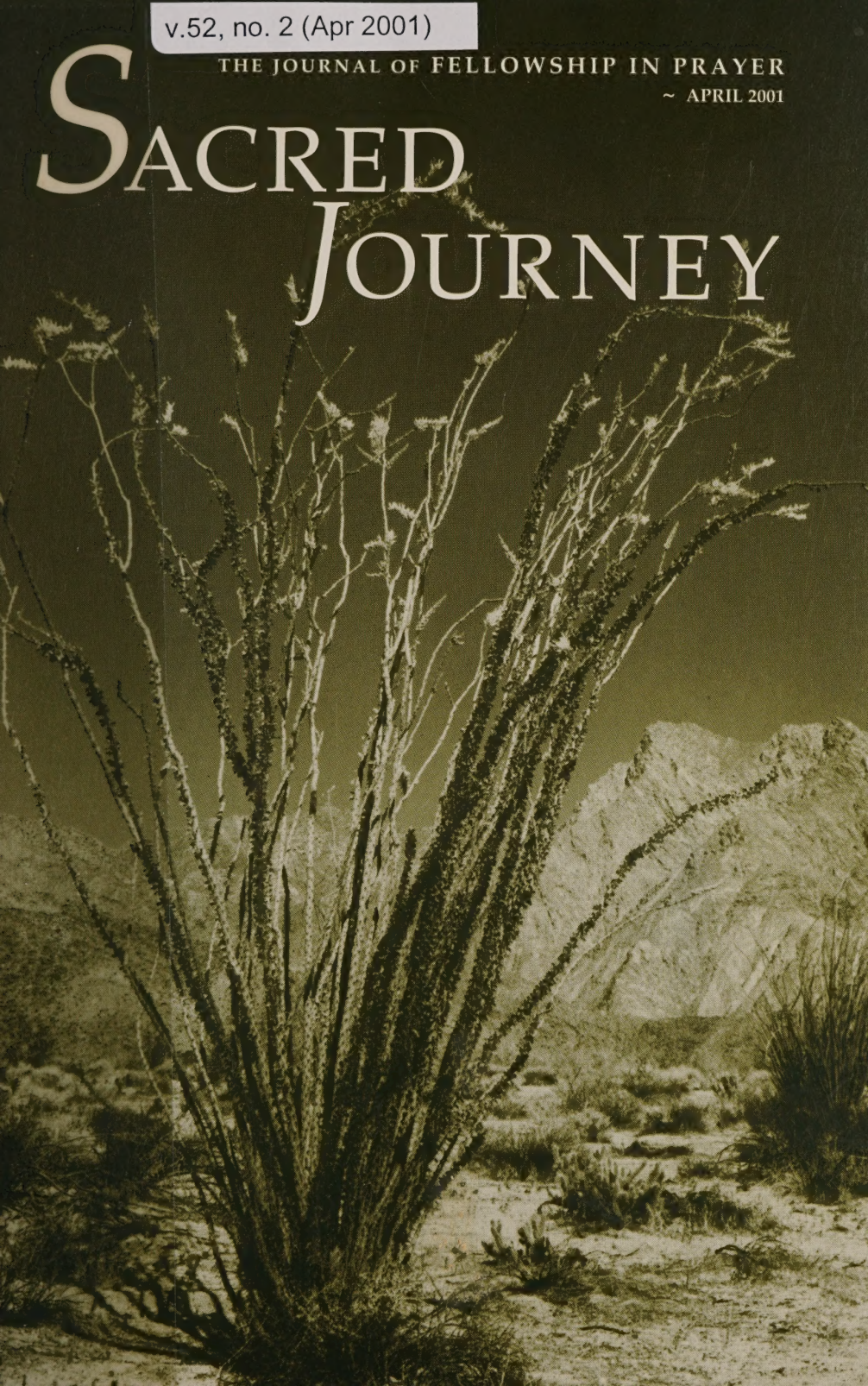
THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER
~ APRIL 2001

SACRED JOURNEY



SACRED JOURNEY®

THE JOURNAL OF FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

The mission of Fellowship in Prayer is

to encourage and support

a spiritual orientation to life,

to promote the practice of

prayer,

meditation,

and service to others,

and to help bring about

a deeper spirit of unity

among humankind.

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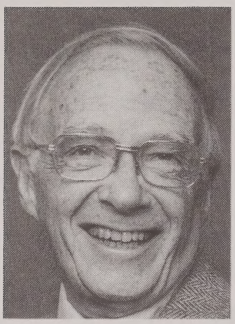
Cover photo by Robert F. Campbell

ALLELUIA!



Easter, according to Webster's dictionary, was originally the name of a Germanic goddess who was worshiped at the spring equinox. Who, and how, do we celebrate at Easter today? Do we go to Mass? A sunrise service? Do we pray in a hospital bed or a prison cell?

Wherever we are, however we celebrate, Easter symbolizes new life, new hope. We can sense and smell and see and hear the new life that is burgeoning up all around us after the long, dreary months of cold and dark and a seemingly lifeless earth.

And inside us, where the Spirit, like a sleeping princess, has lain dormant far too long, we feel the stirrings of a resurrection—of a new life. A new beginning in which we vow to spend more time in the light and less time in the darkness of anger, fear, jealousy, and resentment, in fruitless pursuit of money, power, popularity, and whatever other goodies the ego wants.

Innately, we all know what God wants of us: love, compassion, and service to others. The journey that leads to union with God is known and celebrated by all the world's major faith communities. For example:

On April 2, millions of Hindus celebrate *Ramnavami*—the nine day festival in honor of the birth of *Rama*, one of the principal Hindu incarnations of God.

On April 7, at sundown, Jews the world over begin the two week celebration of *Pesach*, or Passover, commemorating the Israelite exodus from Egypt and their release from bondage or slavery.

On April 8, millions of Christians begin their observance of Holy Week with Palm Sunday, marking the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Friday the thirteenth—Good Friday—the most solemn day of the Christian year, remembers the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, and Easter Sunday is a joyous celebration of the risen Christ.

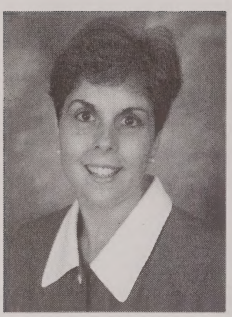
On April 16, the Yaqui Deer Dance takes place in the southwest region of the United States. This ceremony integrates ancient rites of the Yaqui people with the Christian Easter ceremony.

April 21 through May 2 commemorates the twelve day period of the formal declaration of Bah'a' U'llah that he was a messenger of God. Today, there are some five million followers of the Baha'i Faith in 232 countries.

Different as these faith communities may be in their specific beliefs and rituals, they reflect the fact that the world's peoples are united in their understanding that the daily practice of love, compassion, and wise action is at the heart of our, and the world's salvation. *Alleluia!* And the happiest of holy seasons to you!

REBECCA LAIRD/EDITOR

The Posture of the Spiritual Life



Advice varies: Sit in a straight-backed chair with feet on the floor to pray. Assume a lotus position on a *zafu* cushion to meditate. Keep your spine aligned and don't fidget. Go regularly to the same place and assume a consistent posture for your spiritual discipline or practice. Others disagree, and say relax your body, allow the ground to support you. Just make room for the spirit wherever and whenever possible.

There are many physical postures and practices that allow body, mind and spirit to unite, but for me, the central stance for the spiritual life is best described as standing with one hand on the doorknob ready to open up and receive.The Bible describes Jesus as standing at the door of our hearts and knocking. It's up to us to open the door and let him come in and share the homey, imperfect spaces of our lives.

We are asked to open ourselves up to entertain new ideas, embrace unknown people, welcome lessons others have to teach us, and accept insights or wounds that arise from those closed off places in our own lives. It takes faith and courage to welcome the unknown.

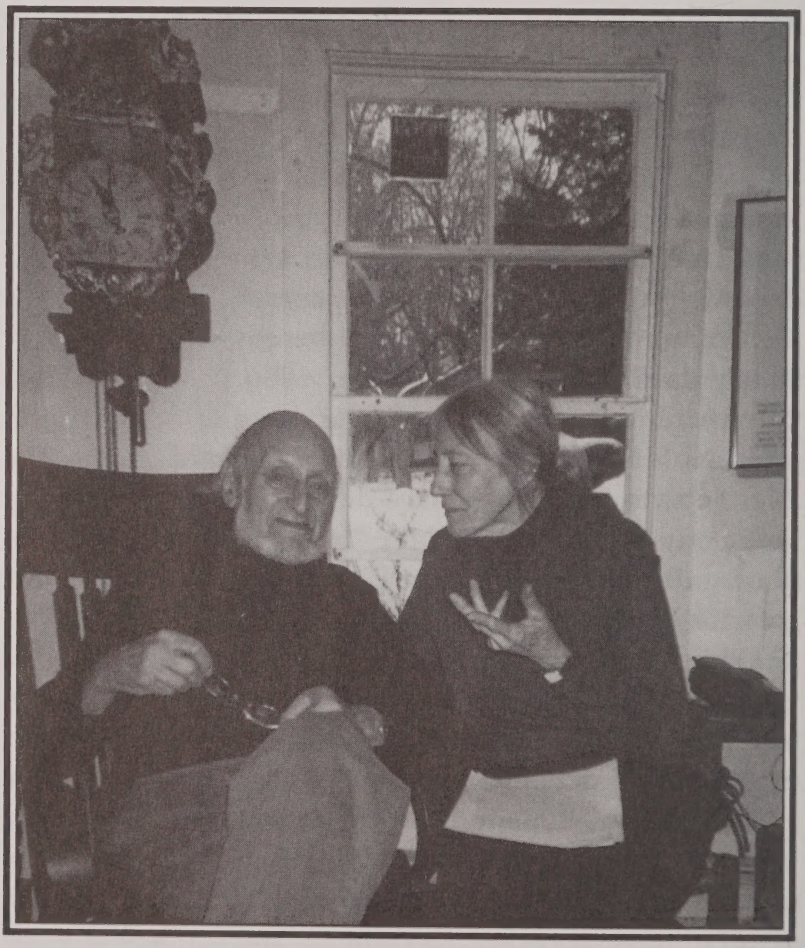
In this issue stalwart seekers model for us how to open up new vistas in the spiritual life. Garnette Arledge, who first interviewed artist Frederick Franck for Fellowship in Prayer in 1983, returned to Pacem in Terris, a "trans-religious" haven in New York State. Frederick and his wife, Claske, greeted Garnette as if she'd been away just days rather than decades and gave her silent space and time to sit with Frederick's stained glass stations of the cross. Garnette recounts her visit and reflections in "A Place for Peace on Earth."

Steve Fisher, a pastoral counselor, writes in "Out, Out Damned Spot" of finding his way home to his true self while meditating in the hospitable environment of Osage Monastery. In *A Transforming Experience,* Jewel Dhuru, a Canadian woman, learns to carry her joy with her during lonely days in Saudi Arabia. Mary Oto Lijadu considers the African custom of welcoming aging as a friend that carries wisdom. In "Lessons Learned from the Mennonites," Debra Beatty describes a foot-washing ceremony that exemplified the "benevolent love" she was shown during her turbulent early years. Tamir enchants us with the story of a chickadee in "A Gift of Spring."

While in Ireland, Brenda McCarthy learns that "God is constantly present in our lives but we are not always receptive to that presence." Half a world away in Northern California, Robert Reese describes the relationship of student to Zen teacher: "When we meet a true teacher, when we knock on her door and she knocks on ours, she opens for us our own mind and leads us from room to room revealing its contents and limits."

Newness is knocking. Will you reach out your hand? Open up.

Frederick and Claske Franck



A PLACE FOR PEACE ON EARTH

A Visit with the Artist-Illustrator Frederick Franck

Garnette Arledge

Visitors to Pacem in Terris, ninety-two-year-old Frederick Franck's oasis of quiet and sanity, where spirit and nature reconnect, do well to pause on the small stone bridge and listen to the water rushing over the rocky Wawayanda River. Pacem in Terris, which means peace on earth in Latin, is located on a crossroads near Warwick, New York only ninety minutes from the George Washington Bridge but a world away from grimy Manhattan.

Pacem in Terris is a place of fecund beauty where wet, shiny leaves and foliage provide the backdrop for Franck's multi-media works of art. In 1963, Franck, his beloved wife Claske, and one good Dutch carpenter took over a ruined eighteenth-century grist mill and removed more than 1200 wheelbarrows of debris in the re-creation process.

Franck calls Pacem in Terris a "trans-religious sanctuary." Over the decades the meaning of "trans-religious" has clarified itself. Franck has written that at the point where classical religious traditions converge in their mature forms, an awareness arises at the deepest

Garnette Arledge, M.Div., for thirty years has been fascinated with the wellspring of creativity and the interior life. She is a spiritual director and active in wellness and death education. She lives in Morristown, New Jersey.

levels of one's inner life that rejects verbalization. That is why Franck, who says he doesn't think in concepts so much as in images, expresses the all-pervading mystery of life through steel, wood, stone, and stained glass. He explains, "When I am asked 'What does this one mean?' the answer is likely to be: 'If I could tell you in words, I would not have to say it in steel.'" Pacem in Terris houses Franck's sculpture, mosaics, and carved Way-posts and provides summer performances of chamber music and Franck's rendition of the medieval Everyman pageants. Zen-like in appearance but baroque in its creative abundance, Pacem in Terris was built as a monument to "humaness." Franck says, "It is dedicated to what is Human in every human being."

"There is something in you, in me. . ." the artist-sage began, once we were settled under a 1730 Frisian clock with the patter of rain mingling with each tick, tick. Time collapsed as I was swept back nearly twenty years, when I first interviewed Franck on assignment from Fellowship in Prayer in 1983. (Excerpts from that first interview are found on page 14.) We seemed to continue that first conversation, not begin anew. In our first encounter, Franck had said, "You don't forget people after you have really been in touch with them." So this felt like a reunion rather than a reintroduction.

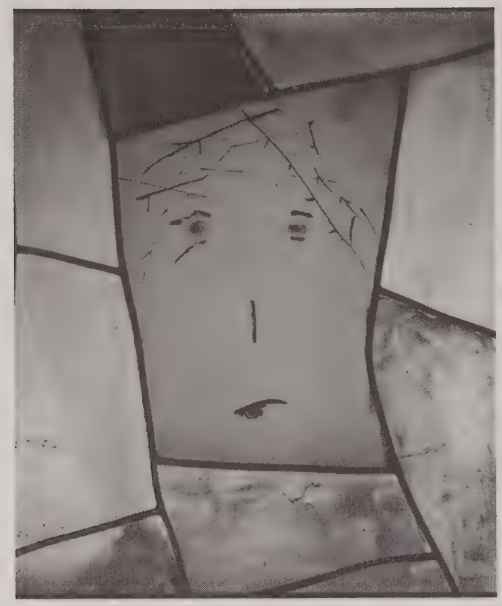
Much water has flowed through the Francks' river of life in recent years. A devastating car crash in 1999 incapacitated both Frederick and Claske for a year, rendering them fragile in body but not dampening either's feistiness, humor or courage. Franck published five books in the past year alone. Over the years his sculptures have been installed at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in Manhattan, Kirkridge Retreat Center and Penn State

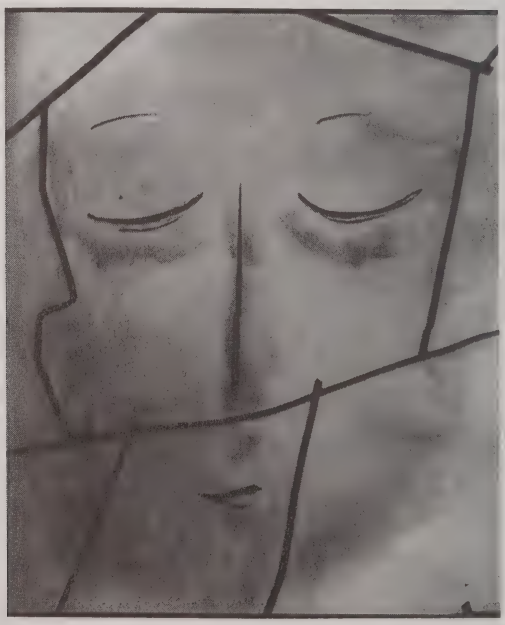
University in Pennsylvania, and as far away as Brazil, Holland, and Germany.

During my visit, Franck sat peacefully in a whitewashed room near his painting gallery. The smell of a good, Dutch pipe lingered in the rain-heavy air as he paused before answering how his thoughts have changed over the two decades since we talked. "I am anti-transcendent now. I talk about translucence. Something quite beyond can become ours when we really see, when we really see phenomena. If one has the capacity to see, as opposed to look, the flesh becomes translucent."

Franck, who continues to travel internationally, has opened exhibits of his paintings in Brussels, New York, Tokyo, and Rome. In places across the globe he has offered master classes in "The Zen of Seeing," and seeks opportunities to study "humaness." He believes that if we really look at each other and "see" the human condition, then "flesh becomes translucent." He says, "The whole process of living is about becoming sacred without being stamped as such. The transcendental becomes translucent, becomes illumination."

Franck's eyes have seen and drawn the suffering—the lumps and bruises of living—yet his eyes dance as he speaks. His eyes are blue but seem black in contrast to his white hair and beard and transparent skin. He seems less a nonagenarian and more vividly a sage who can now revel in the fullness of his creativity. Franck's life and work are a tribute to three great beings, Daisetz T. Suzuki, a Buddhist sage, Albert Schweitzer, a Protestant doctor, and John XXIII, a Roman Catholic Pope who enriched his life and to whom Pacem is dedicated. Franck, who holds degrees in medicine, dentistry, and fine arts, spent time on the medical staff at Lambarene, Africa, and wrote *Days*





"Condemned to Death" and "He Is Risen" by Frederick Franck. Reprinted from The Tao of the Cross and The Oxherding Parable. *© 1996 Frederick Franck. Used by permission of Royal Fireworks Press, First Avenue, Unionville, NY 10988.*

with Albert Schweitzer. Later, he gave his life over to his art and was the only artist to record the sessions of Vatican II through his paintings.

Together the Francks have rescued their corner of the world. Pacem is a model of the "think globally, act locally" maxim. Earth that had seen severe environmental damage is now a fertile oasis. Franck says, "Buddha said our nature is suffering, impermanence, painful, a garbage dump like we found Pacem, bound to fall to pieces. [But we can] go beyond ego to the True Self. There is so little in this society that gives a chance to the True Self. Pollution—we read it, breathe it, drink it, eat it. Pollution is highly organized. It is in every aspect of living now. Pacem in Terris is a reminder that there is something else." The old grist mill came to life again with enormous effort by the couple who operated on a financial shoestring. ("The Shoestring" is aptly the whimsical name of the Pacem in Terris newsletter.) "You could say it has been a miracle, for without begging, enough money has come in to continue; without corporate or foundation grants," Franck says.

Frederick Franck then turned the tables on his interviewer shifting to a more enduring subject and asked: "What happens after death?" I paused. Was this a koan? Was this a question meant for lifelong study? Then Frederick joked, changing the moment, teasing that someday he would send me a letter from the beyond, then added seriously: "Individually, from my little ego, I think that this ego does not survive. In fact I don't even want to survive—for then I would not have the same wife with me—but Pacem reminds me there is something else—beyond ego there is the True Self." Then, he turned to his beloved partner, "If I have the same wife, yes, I would want to survive." The steady radiance of their partnership blazed as they looked at each

other. "She sees the same way I do." Franck says of one of his newest books, *Pacem in Terris: A Love Story*, "It is the story of how Claske and I after forty-five years are more attached than ever to each other." It is amazing that such love remains possible, but without that, Pacem in Terris would not be possible.

Franck knows that I have come to see his stations of the cross. I ask him how he came to produce this work in stained-glass, not his regular milieu. He says, "This is a strange story. A man in Iowa, a paper merchant, sends donations once in a while. He had seen my ink drawings of the Way of the Cross and wondered if I had thought of translating them into stained glass. This intrigued me for I think it is scandalous that the medieval way of the cross had fourteen stations—scandalous because the resurrection was not in it. The cross makes no sense without resurrection. Otherwise the crucifixion is just murderous cruelty. After investigating the cost of materials I called him and told him that the out-of-pocket expenses for the lead and framing, not including my work, would cost $9,999.99. He was quiet for ten seconds. 'I will send you a check.'" He did and the work Franck finished in 1996 awaits me. I look forward to what I will see.

When our conversation closes, I leave Frederick and Claske leads the way along the riverbank, past the dovecote and through the carefully planted high grasses that frame a small, naturally hewn wooden gallery. As we walk, she notes that being with another when "seeing is potent" allows words to wane. We silently walk toward the simple building that houses Franck's stained glass pieces that depict fifteen stations of the cross and the Zen story of "The Oxherding Parable." I wonder at the juxtaposition of these powerful images. How did this old Reform Dutchman who has long traveled the path of Zen Buddhism, come to explore the cross

and the Tao? Alone in the small gallery, I sat with the artwork, quieted by the simplicity and the aching beauty of Christ seen through the Zen eyes of Frederick Franck.

In an age of increasing complexity, Franck distills art to its bare elements: a brush stroke evokes misery, suffering, despair. A single stark line renders dignity, patience, surrender. In Franck's hand, less becomes vastly more. His art becomes a meditation by the artist that is shared with the viewer. I linger.

Later, when I make my way back to their home, silenced by spending some profound moments with the resurrected Christ, Franck is laughing with another visitor, his grown son, Lukas. They look up: "How did you find it?" the artist queries. Words catch in my heart, tears spontaneously flow. I am unable to speak. "Ah," he says, "That is enough." Claske puts her hand on my shoulder, "Yes."

I have seen and been seen. For a time all is translucent. The river flows and weaves around the rocks, the rain falls, a chill air settles deeply on the bridge. In the silent evening, there is peace on earth.

ILLUMINATIONS

Pilgrimage

I see the way of the artist as a kind of pilgrimage. When you go on a pilgrimage, you set out from where you happen to be and start walking toward a place of great sanctity in the hope of returning from it renewed, enriched, and sanctified. However far you may walk, every pilgrimage is a safari into your own dark interior, an inner journey. For pilgrimages belong to the inner world, to the realm called the 'religious.'

Zen

Zen is in reality a matter of being in touch with the innermost working of life. It is, of course, also a Buddhist school of thought, but I am not talking about that. It is an inscape, instead of an escape, of going deeply inside yourself. In other words, it is not an intellectual approach, rather an experiential approach.

True Seeing

If I sketch a face, I conceptualize it, it becomes an oval with some scribbles for the hair. If I *draw* that face I am confronted with a total mystery, for drawing is an act of reverence and respect for that human face. A cow just looks, but a human being has the capacity to *see*, and is not just an onlooker; he has the capacity to identify with what confronts him. Modern [people] are bombarded so constantly with images, that [we have] lost the art of seeing. We eat celery, lettuce, all our

lives, we can recognize and label things but we never *see* our celery stalk until we draw it. Then we can begin to use the eye/heart/hand reflex and life opens up.

Beliefs

I have few "beliefs" and I am open to changing them at the drop of a hat. But I am not without faith, that is, trust. Trust in the Buddha nature, that Christ spirit that I see as the core of every human being. Here I find the totally valid image of what being human is all about, to be the human core. One may say that this deepest human reality is unattainable for us ordinary human beings. Still, unless we glimpse it, I feel that we have missed the point of having lived the human life. This is the fundamental paradox.

Exerpts from "Interview with the Artist-Illustrator, Frederick Franck" by Garnette Arledge, Fellowship in Prayer, May 1983.

Out, Out Damned Spot

Steve C. Fisher

As so often happens in the journey toward wholeness, one experience of healing reveals a deeper level of woundedness. Such happened to me a dozen years ago when, after a particularly fertile time of inner release, I became aware of a feeling of blackness that seemed to reside in my core. While there were no noticeable changes in my outer life and I continued to have my share of joys and sorrows as before, in my inner world there arose from the depths this unshakeable sense of rottenness, of being contaminated at my center. It wasn't something that consumed my consciousness, but it did always lurk in the shadows of my awareness. When I did tune in, there it was. Ugh! It left me with the feeling of somehow being fraudulent. Here I was counseling with people every day as a professional and yet living with an aching sense that something was terribly askew at my core. I was

Steve Fisher is a pastoral psychologist and Executive Director of the Greater Lowell Pastoral Counseling Center. He lives with his daughter and son in Westford, Massachusetts. He is convinced that his Christian faith must be re-imagined to "sing."

embarrassed. Everyone has their issues but this one felt like it cut right to my essence. On another level, as discomforting as this new realization was, I also recognized it as a gift from God and took comfort in knowing that I now had the freedom to be aware of this inner demon. I also knew that with this new recognition came the possibility of healing and I hoped I had the courage to face whatever I would need to face. But I didn't have a clue where to turn or what needed to be done. I just knew that I needed to know that God's love for me was bigger than the sense of badness. God's light more real than the darkness. I couldn't help but be reminded of Lady Macbeth's plaintive cry, "Out, out damned spot." I knew I wanted my spot out.

As a pastoral psychologist attuned to the meeting ground of psychology and spirituality, I sensed that my healing would require working in both arenas. With this conviction, but lacking a compass, I set out on my quest. Along the way, I tasted and tested a plethora of psycho-spiritual approaches from bio-energetics to energy work, intuitives to shamans, birth trauma to inner healing. All of these experiences enriched my life but none reached deeply enough into the recesses of my soul. At the same time, I explored Christian charismatic healing and prayer with some well-known healers who offered compassion and hope but not the solace I longed for. I later went on a series of eight-day Ignatian retreats over several years and prayed ardently using scripture and active imagination while resting in the silence. Occasional glimpses of "heaven" were given but too much of the time I only saw more of my woundedness. I felt that I couldn't even pray right; others on the retreats seemed to be getting it but I wasn't.

In desperation, I turned to Centering Prayer about five years ago. I fell in love with Thomas Keating's lovely and luminous explanation of this contemplative process and his account of healing in his book, *Open Mind, Open Heart.* Maybe here was an approach at which I couldn't fail, depending as it did so much on the "cloud of unknowing." Maybe I wouldn't have to work hard to DO anything, maybe I could simply let myself sink into Being. I committed myself to a daily practice to which I have been faithful ever since. I focus my attention on my breath as I repeat my mantra/sacred word. Over the first six to twelve months, I couldn't put my finger on any changes. But then gradually I began to feel a subtle softening and gentling taking place within me. As time passed, I came to feel a little lighter and more content. But nothing was budging in my core.

Still unsatisfied, I turned for help to a wise woman of the spirit who has served as an informal spiritual director over the years. Her basic advice was, "Get thee into the wilderness, into the desert, for a month and give God a chance to do his/her thing." I wasn't quite ready for a month, but half a month was doable. So off I went to Osage Monastery in Oklahoma, a center for east-west dialogue, imbued with the prophetic and mystical spirit of Bede Griffiths, the English Benedictine monk. Bede had gone to India for the second half of his life "to find the other half of my soul," the receptive, feminine consciousness that he found so alive among the Hindu people of south India.

The first week passed uneventfully as I entered into the rhythm of prayer at the ashram which included two daily hour long contemplative "sits" with the community. As the day passed, I became increasingly restless about

my inability to maintain concentration and quiet my mind, which I intuitively sensed held the key to getting wherever I needed to go. On the eighth day, I hunkered down on my *zafu* cushion and cried out:

> Okay God, I've had enough. You don't seem to be helping me one little bit to truly slow down and I'm mad as hell. So I'm putting you on notice. I'm going to sit here until I center; I'm going to sit here all day, I'm going to sit here all night, I'm going to sit here until the cows come home or hell freezes over if that's what it takes. Nothing is going to stop me; not you, not my crazy vigilant mind, nothing.

So I sat and sat all morning. With a fierce persistence, I focused and refocused my attention in a slightly weird way (splitting my attention by watching myself breathe with half of my mind while maintaining a general focus on the blank screen of awareness with the other half). This "technique" at long last brought my mind to a dead standstill. I had come to see that sheer passivity, simply allowing whatever wanted to come up in the flow of consciousness to float by, was not helpful. What was called for was the warrior's determination to maintain stability of attention.

I rested in that peaceful space where all was still, enjoying just being there. Then something shifted. My consciousness intensified its concentration and a cool, tingling sensation filled my being. Then I noticed myself starting to breathe a little heavily and to feel as if refreshing and pleasurable waters were flowing over and through

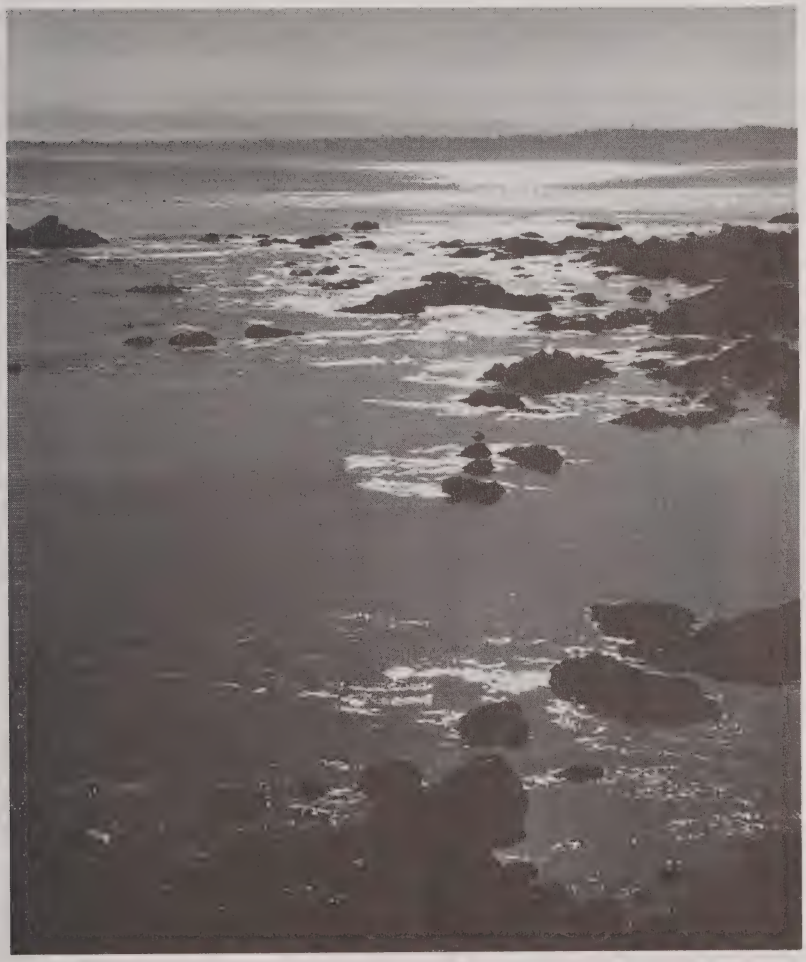
me. Soon a more profound release overtook me and I passed over a threshold and felt myself dropping down into what the Shaker tune calls that "place just right, the valley of love and delight." I had never felt so calm, rejuvenated, enfolded, fluid, graceful. I now found I could think about anything without my equanimity being disturbed. I was free to wander or play or ponder in tranquility. At long last, I felt I was finding my way home.

During the remainder of my stay at Osage, I was able to return to this place more and more easily and spontaneously. There was no longer any struggle to get there. What had taken such effort to begin with was becoming the natural movement of a faithful heart. I found arising within me a quiet wellspring of joy, a heartfelt gratitude, and a confidence in God that had never been so palpable before. I felt something was changing inside. About that time I came across a quote from Meister Eckhart which put words to my experience. "When we return to our first origin, which is our primal purity, we discover our freedom and are free." Somehow I had touched beneath the blackness into a more primal level of essence, a pure space that had never been sullied and where I was free to dwell in my true nature, the image of God. In uncovering a true center, my eyes were opened to a more fundamental truth about myself, it became clear that the sense of rottenness I had experienced as part of my core was only an appearance, a case of mistaken identity. Simultaneously, the feeling of blackness dissolved and disappeared.

At long last, I was finding my way home.

Alas, when I returned from the monastery, the experience of resting in the land of milk and honey did

not continue. What did remain was the awareness and, yes, even the knowledge that my center was clear light and undefiled. Two years later, I can happily report that the sense of badness has not shown up again. While there is yet much to heal, I continue to give thanks and drink from the well of contentment in knowing that that "damned spot" is out. The radiance of God's presence within has shown itself to be deeper than any darkness.



Robert F. Campbell

Exploring the Neighborhood in Saudi Arabia

Jewel Dhuru

On a warm day I sat waiting for my husband in an old shopping area of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Every square inch of my skin, except for my hands and face, was covered with loose fitting clothes in earth-toned colors. Still, the lingering, unabashed stares from men walking by on this much-frequented walkway reminded me that, apparently, modesty is a relative term. We had been in the country just three weeks, and I hadn't had the opportunity to buy an *abaya*, the black robe that is customarily worn by Saudi women. To keep from getting too unnerved, I tried to keep my mind busy. The traffic on the street was constant and the occasional honks blasted when cars passed me took on an annoying connotation. I wondered if my command of Arabic was good enough for me to jump into the nearest taxi and return to the University where we lived and where my husband was to teach during our ten-month stay.

Jewel Dhuru was born in Saskatchewan and grew up in Manitoba. She works as a spiritual counselor with a speciality in breathwork. She is an English tutor and artist who paints and works with clay. Her husband is from India and they currently live in Wisconsin.

My legs had been tired by the time we had reached the shops. I sat near a pillar with a bench built around it near the main road. There were very few other females around and those I did see were mainly Filipinas swaddled in black. Sitting there on my bench, I felt alternately like a dog tied to a post awaiting its master's return or an item on display in a red-light district. I felt only relief when Baba, my husband, returned a mere fifteen minutes later, but it had seemed an age. We had chosen that day to go shopping at one of the older markets called Batha. We later learned that Batha was one of the more conservative areas of the city. Thus, the excessive stares.

Baba and I would go out frequently in the evenings. We explored the city or went to shops to purchase the things we needed. Since there were no movie theaters or public concerts, shopping was actually a form of entertainment. Shopping and eating out had to be done before or after prayer times, held twice each evening, because everything closed for thirty minutes. On a previous trip to Egypt and a subsequent one to Bahrain, both Islamic countries, we noticed that nothing closed during prayer time as it did here. In addition, women drove cars and wore colorful but modest clothing in these two countries. Ironically, when I got my black *abaya* and scarf a few days after our visit to Batha, it freed me to go out more often, sometimes by myself without being so conspicuous because I blended in. On the campus, the atmosphere was freer, and when I left, I was careful about where and with whom I went. I learned to always carry a book or notepaper to bury myself in to avoid stares.

One evening, a week after the episode at Batha, when returning home from one of our excursions, as usual, our taxi was waved through the checkpoint at the entrance to

campus housing. We disembarked and walked past the playground near our building. Baba asked me if I wanted to introduce myself to the Saudi ladies sitting under the balcony of our second-floor flat. He had plenty of male companions from work, but he was concerned about my limited access to suitable company. Since he was there for support, even though I wasn't quite prepared, I decided to plunge in. I said, "Excuse me," to the woman standing at the nearest edge of the playground and explained we'd just moved in and I wanted to say hello. She was wearing the usual all black and I could only see her eyes as she turned to face me. After assessing me for a long moment she said, "No English." She pointed toward another lady, similarly clad, sitting on a swing in the sandy playground. I moved in that direction. Our brief conversation was confused and centered around her asking me what building I was looking for. Finally I figured out that she seemed to believe that I was looking for the building right behind me, although I was only trying to tell her that was where I lived. Then she said dismissively, "Go there." I thought under the circumstances, it was a good idea, so in my own time, I turned my steps toward home. Baba trailed thoughtfully behind. I could feel my heart closing up with resentment, sadness, and fear. I reminded myself with some difficulty that this land was made by God, just like every other. If I had given in to the pressure, I would have lived a cloistered life, at times not even bothering to put on day clothes under my *abaya* when I did go out. But this choice would have been made from a position of weakness, not strength. I rebelled at the thought.

I learned to carry my joy with me.

To get over these mild traumas, I used an exercise to

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preserve my calm and confidence. I remembered what it felt like to be really loved, drawing on memories of selected dear friends and relatives. Fortified by these thoughts, I could then deal with my current situation without shame or blame and without allowing others to sap my energy. I learned how to carry my joy with me and not lose it because I was surrounded by threat and fear. Eventually, the fear of smiling in public abated. I smiled for myself when my contentment bubbled over and when I felt at peace with who I was and with my purpose. I had come here to learn about this culture with as much valuable history and pastimes as my own. There was a beautiful language to study and music to hear. It was still difficult to make a heart connection with others, but I had made a start.

Eventually we got our phone service working and called our kids. I became more comfortable learning when, where, how, and to whom it was appropriate to speak. When I interacted with those who accepted the ways of others, like Indian or Egyptian shopkeepers, I felt a sense of these men being my neighbors rather than the opposite sex. In time, I did make the acquaintance of some expatriates, and these relationships led to valued friendships. One afternoon, my doorbell rang. It was a woman shrouded in black. She said, "I'm your next-door neighbor. I understand you're new and I've come to say hello." She was the answer to a prayer. I subsequently met her husband and four well-behaved children. They were expatriates like us. Things looked up.

A mantra

Kathryn Kruger

A mantra
is a talisman
the ladder's steps
its even rungs

climbing the wall
of the hidden well
that everyday
I fall in—

a rosary path
each word a lantern
threading the forest
of my dark,

a gossamer cape
a magician's hat
to disappear
my breeding thoughts.

Kathryn Kruger's sacred journey has led her all over the world from Italy to India. She says her greatest (and most difficult) journey has been on an inner path of deep prayer and meditation. Her poetry has appeared in Sufi Magazine, Quest, *and* Tar River Poetry. *She lives in Illinois.*

Soothing, like a
smooth stone
when pressed against
the mind's thumb,

a safe ship
I choose to sail,
good ballast
in a storm.

A mantra is
a bullet-proof vest
against my
loaded gun.

It circulates
with blood and breath
this silence
beneath my tongue.

In My Third Journey

Mary Oto Lijadu

> Aging is the turning of the wheel, the gradual fulfillment of the life cycle . . . . Aging does not need to be hidden or denied, but can be understood, affirmed, and experienced as a process of growth by which the mystery of life is slowly revealed to us. *~Henri Nouwen*

I am now in my third journey in life. This journey will finally take me to my eternal home. I believe, without an iota of doubt, that this aging period in my life is a special gift that needs nurturing.

Aging, adolescence, and middle-age each has its own crisis, and a crisis means a turning point that leads in a fresh direction. This brings to my mind an old nun's prayer, "O God I am getting old and one day I shall be dead." This stark statement made a mark on me. Since I turned sixty, I have had a forecast about old age. I will experience a sudden breakdown in health, my actions will slow. I will sleep less, retire from public work, find myself envying youth and resisting my diminishing strength. I will

Mary Oto Lijadu discovered our journal while on retreat in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She writes from Nigeria in West Africa.

struggle with serenity and loneliness and will try to keep up appearances. If this is what lies ahead, what is the gift in this third journey? How am I to respond? What tools would help me in making choices and discerning?

Homeward Bound

What impresses me most about this stage in life is that it is a unique gift whereby divine providence directs me, provided I cooperate. I find that a lot of my agitation, anxiety, and fear diminish when tranquility, silence, contemplation, and constant prayer begin to dominate my mind. I repeat often to myself that this is my special period of life. This encourages me to sit back and relax. To be seen and to be heard no longer predominate my outward interaction with people. My craving for ease of mind must yield to the communion I desire with God, through Jesus Christ. The grace and risk of old age lie hidden within the crisis.

The Age of Wisdom

Now in this third journey how do I view my life's vicissitudes? Of course, I see them very differently than before. My problems take on a new look; they are now God's way of teaching me how to learn to trust in God's care and love of me. What a revelation! In reflecting on my past life, especially that turbulent middle-age period when the world dazzled me, I now ask why did I have to worry and suffer from all those worries that now seem frivolous?

In Africa the third journey is regarded as the moment of truth when one enters the age of wisdom that is to be respected. Most elders in Africa are considered to be human libraries because of the wealth of experience that has been gathered during past periods. To the Africans, elders are next to God in their ability to deliberate and

have perspective on community affairs. Knowledge of traditional norms is taken seriously and is used to resolve and settle village and local matters. Villagers often visit the elders in the morning to receive their blessings. The elders' presence at ceremonies and celebrations is vital and all efforts are made to participate actively. This respect leads to a communal willingness to care for the elders. This honor is embedded in African culture. The idea of putting older people into nursing homes is very foreign. It is considered a great blessing when your older family members live with your family. When my youngest son was about thirteen years old, he said to me, "Mummy when you are old you can come and live with me, but remember, if I am going out with my family, I'll have to leave you behind with the television and the dog." I responded with delight, "Tayo, that is very thoughtful. I hope you will remember to leave some food for me as well."

My Spiritual Third Journey

There are charisms of each age that are concealed by activity in earlier years, but in older age need to be brought out of hiding. The most valid response to the third journey is to cultivate total attention to what is happening in the moment with humble intensity. T.S. Eliot wrote, "Old men ought to be explorers." This new period of spiritual exploration happens when we are still and cultivate a deeper and further union with God. If we do this, what went on before on the borders in the spiritual life will soon seem like child's play.

Significant Symbol

The most significant symbol of the Third Journey can be likened to climbing a mountain. For Jesus, this journey

is seen in the mystery of the transfiguration when he set out on his last journey to Jerusalem. He climbed the mountain with a few friends to ask his father to affirm him, to let him know he was truly doing his will before his final mission that led to his death. Likewise, as we all embark on the awesome pilgrimage of the third journey, we must follow the call to climb the mountain to hear the confirmation of God's call to the depths beyond contemplation and solitude that will lead us to the consummation and glory of our union with God.

This is what the third journey is all about.

Robert F. Campbell

Lessons Learned From the Mennonites

Debra Beatty

I had heard of the Quakers during grammar school, but my personal introduction to the Mennonites came quite by accident (or was it the hand of God?) when I was a teenager. At seventeen years of age, I ran away from home in sheer frustration over conflicting loyalties toward my father and my boyfriend. God must have been watching over me, because I escaped harm at every turn. The first danger came when I stupidly tried to overdose on pills. To compound the danger, I attempted to hitchhike on the freeway. A trucker stopped to give me a ride. Just as he was about to take advantage of me, I threw up the pills. He left me by the side of the road. Then I was picked up

Debra Beatty is a freelance writer from Kansas City, Missouri. Besides writing from personal experience, she enjoys reading and writing about history and the people involved. Her goal is to make history more personal to today's youth.

Editor's note—The Mennonites of today represent a broad spectrum of people who claim a common Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage. During the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century, a small group gathered for Bible study and prayer in Zurich, Switzerland felt they should re-baptize each other and form a church around the belief that people should voluntarily follow Christ and signify this belief through adult baptism rather than joining the state church through infant baptism. In 1536, Menno Simons, a Catholic priest in north Holland became an Anabaptist leader by writing and speaking about community, peacemaking, simplicity, and servanthood. For more information on the Mennonites see The Third Way Café on the Internet at www.thirdway.com.

by a car full of drinking youths. I was sick again. Back to the side of the road.

A lady then picked me up and took me to her house. She didn't lecture me about the dangers of hitchhiking, probably because she had noticed my enlarged pupils, a sure sign of my drug-induced state. She gave me clean clothes and allowed me to use her shower. She told me where I could get help and gave me cab fare.

She sent me to a halfway house owned and operated by Mennonites in Cottage City, Maryland. Since the halfway house was for young men, it was arranged for me to stay with a couple from the community, Mr. and Mrs. Hostetter. They were very special people who lived in a simple way but used modern devices to do good for themselves and others. Lois Hostetter wore the traditional Mennonite dress with a modesty panel, hiding her feminine beauty. She also wore a small net head-covering pinned to her crown of white hair.

She showed me her garden that she loved to labor in to provide fresh produce for her friends and family. She canned the over-abundance and stored it up in her basement. The jars ranged from tomatoes and squash to jellies and jams.

Mr. Hostetter joked about his bald head, calling it his "chrome-dome," as he put on his hat so he wouldn't get sunburned. He showed me his home-grown amusement park in the roomy backyard. He had fun tinkering with farm discards to make a park in which underprivileged kids could play. One play house was made from the top of an old grain silo. A pulley from an old winch was used for a cable ride, which he delighted in demonstrating. He told me this hobby let him finally put to use his college engineering courses.

Mr. Hostetter had as much fun showing me the amusement park as I'm sure the kids had playing there. It was wonderful to see a grown man with so much joy. One of the reasons I had run away was because my father was in a persistently foul mood and sometimes had given me a bloody nose in exchange for some misbehavior. I always thought I must be really bad, but never knew what was expected of me until I did something wrong. Mr. Hostetter's joyful behavior was unique and remarkable to me.

I had never known such benevolent love.

Mrs. Hostetter showed me to a spare room where I stayed playing my guitar. I didn't know what else to do. An hour later, Mrs. Hostetter asked me to help with dinner. I was delighted to be included. Helping with dinner relieved my embarrassment of eating with them. I had no social skills at all. My family always ate in the dark watching television.

After grace was said, we ate as a family and talked. I glowed when Mrs. Hostetter told her husband that I helped make dinner. This was the beginning of building my self-worth.

Mr. Hostetter was a building inspector. He suggested that I apply with the county for a secretarial job. After doing so, he suggested I send a thank you note. He taught me that persistence and courtesy works wonders in the business world. I still use those precepts today.

I had a boyfriend named Mike who was going through basic training and technical school in the Air Force. My father disapproved of him without even trying to get to know him. He had invited Mike over

once, and, of course, Mike was an opinionated and outspoken nineteen-year-old. My father told me never to have him over again.

When Mike finished Air Force training, he was stationed near to where I was staying in Maryland. The Hostetters welcomed him with open arms. They got to know him and allowed him to see me regularly in their house. They would also counsel us together and separately. Their everyday conversation was filled with practical wisdom that we both learned from.

Mike and I were married a few months after my eighteenth birthday at the Mennonite church. We had a foot-washing ceremony the week before with the women in the basement and the men upstairs. It was very emotional for me to see Mrs. Hostetter humbling herself to wash my feet. I told her, "only if I can wash yours." Afterward, we held each other and wept tears of joy. I had never known such benevolent love.

The wedding was beautiful and simple. Mike and I knelt at the altar and took our vows. Afterwards we were surprised with a reception, complete with refreshments and wedding gifts. My mom came to the wedding. I was glad, and she was genuinely happy for me. She had seen me blossom into a happy young woman under the tutelage of Mrs. Hostetter (who had been in constant phone contact with my mother without my knowledge).

We learned a lot from the Mennonites, especially from Mr. and Mrs. Hostetter. They saw us for what we were, so young and untested, like diamonds in the rough to be carefully nurtured and prayed over and then placed in God's hands.

The Gift of Spring

Tamir

The Staten Island Ferry was crowded, yet everyone seemed to be moving away from this one seat. I was carrying two heavy bags and needed to sit down. I approached the vacant seat and saw a little gray lump about two inches round resting on the seat. I thought it was a rock and leaned forward to remove it not understanding why the other passengers hadn't done so. My hand stopped in midair. It was a baby chickadee. It was very still, hurt but alive. I pulled out a manila envelope from my bag and placed it near the bird. It wobbled on to it. I couldn't take the bird off the ferry as we were pulling away from the dock.

I sat down with the manila envelope on my knee. I put my hand protectively over the bird, tenting it. The bird stayed stationary except for its head, which darted from side to side. I carefully took out a book from my satchel and put it on my lap. Suddenly the bird flew up over my head to the other side of the ferry and perched by a window.

Tamir is an actress and dancer from Israel. Her current production is Poetry for Peace/ On Prayer, an interfaith program of prayers from around the world.

The bird had left a miniature foot behind. I went over to the one-legged bird and tried to open the window but it wouldn't budge. I returned to my seat, worked on my essay and occasionally looked up to the window. The bird was still there balancing on one leg.

When we docked in New York, I waited for the crowds to disperse. I approached the bird to gently pick it up but it flew and sat on my head. We walked out onto the landing, the bird and I, heading toward Battery Park. I transferred the tiny bird to my hand and closed my fingers around it, stroking its minuscule head with my forefinger. Then I opened my fingers wide expecting the bird to fly into the air, but it stayed in the palm of my hand.

"Go on little bird," I said.

It hopped from the center to the outer mound of my hand.

"The trees are calling you," I added.

The bird hopped onto my pinkie.

"The flowers are wide open," I whispered.

It hopped to the tip of my little finger.

"Go on, spring is here."

It lingered, then turned its head towards me, paused a wee bit longer and just as suddenly was gone.

I followed it with my eyes and saw it perched on a flowering pink magnolia tree among flowers almost twice its size. I walked away carrying some of its fragile delicacy with me into the noisy underground.

A Rainbow Over Galway

Brenda McCarthy

In April I spent a solitary week in Ireland on a pilgrimage to ease my grief. Death was no stranger. At four, I lost my mother to cancer and my father died of heart disease when I was a high school senior. The grief I now carried was more recent. Within five years, I had lost two other significant people. First, my nephew, Richard, died from an accident at work, and then his mother, my sister, Mary, died from melanoma. Mary had raised me when our mother died young and her son, Richard, was more like my little brother. Time in Ireland, I thought, would help me get perspective and some needed rest.

My journey began in Dublin where I rented a car and drove west intent to see Galway Bay. The song of the same name was a favorite in my family. My father had few records, but "Galway Bay" was one of them. Once in Galway, I found lodging at Villa Maria, a bed and

Brenda McCarthy lives in North Andover, Massachusetts. She is a member of the Essex Writers' and Artists' Guild. A former teacher and community organizer, she now administers a scholarship fund in Boston. "A Rainbow Over Galway" is an excerpt from a book manuscript, An Irish Pilgrimage, *which is in progress.*

breakfast, and then walked to the shore. The air was damp from a recent rain. I walked toward a grassy peninsula lined with dry-docked fishing boats. None were new, though some were newly painted. One in particular captured my interest. It was black with a turquoise interior and on the bow *Fiona* was written in Gaelic script. This wooden boat had no frills but it was strong. I wondered if the Irish woman for whom it was named had the same qualities. As I admired each of these small vessels, I pondered the stories they could tell. How many times had they gone to sea? How many storms had they encountered? How many lives were lost, how many saved?

Further off to the right an inlet was protected by several jetties. Here, the water was calm. I was delighted to see a flock of swans floating there, and I made my way down a flight of stone steps for a closer look. As I approached they moved closer to the water's edge looking for a handout. I was sorry I had no food to offer. I vowed to return after supper with restaurant bread; the best that I could do.

Once on street level again, I continued beyond the inlet and crossed the street. Before me was Galway Bay. I felt like I was about to step on holy ground. Moving forward, I stood on dry sand and gazed over the panorama. To my far left were the buildings of Galway. Some were white, others pastel pink and yellow, still others were slate gray like the fast-moving clouds above. In front of me was the ocean. Rows of black and green seaweed lined the beach. The tide would soon return. The patterns of seaweed would change. Some would return to the sea. What is life if not constant change?

I stood for a while breathing in the damp, fragrant sea air and wondered how many thousands of others had done the same? I was alone yet joined to those who had

stood solitary and pensive on this beach. Whatever their stories might have been, we were connected across time. I was only one of many. It was at once a comforting and lonely thought. I longed to share the time and solitude with someone and began to feel the recent loss of Mary and Richard and the early loss of my parents. Shivering in the bay winds, I turned up my collar, flipped on the hood and pulled my jacket snugly around my shoulders. Clutching the material close, I quietly invited my loved ones to stand with me. As the cold winds grew stronger, the tide reclaimed the beach, inch by inch. It was time to move on. I took one last glance toward Galway's buildings. It was then that a rainbow with its base anchored in the western horizon arched high into the clouds. Within the half circle, the clouds began to break surrendering to sunshine and a sapphire sky.

Never had I seen a rainbow this large. I stood in awe gazing at the phenomenon. Yes it could be explained scientifically. I remember learning about prisms and light waves. This was a natural event, not a miracle. Still, the rainbow encircled more than the sky, it encircled my spirit and its colors warmed my soul. Science couldn't define the rainbow's deeper meaning. For a few moments, I forgot about the cold winds blowing in from the sea. There on the empty beach, beneath the breaking clouds and the rainbow light, I was small and insignificant. At the same time, I was aware of my importance and sensed that I was deeply loved, that I was part of something more, that I was connected to the reality around me, indeed connected to all of creation and to all people.

The Book of Genesis reports that after the great flood, God placed a bow in the sky as a covenant sign of divine presence and care for all creation. Before leaving the

beach, I reflected on that scriptural passage. Certainly our planet has experienced great floods since the time of Genesis. Each year raging waters continue to claim land and lives. So where is God when disaster strikes—whether it is a natural disaster like flood or a personal disaster like the death of a loved one? The rainbow gave me an answer, not in words but in the quiet presence I could have easily missed.

Though breathtaking in its beauty, a rainbow doesn't demand recognition. In this respect the rainbow is like God who is ready to be discovered but seldom, if ever intrusive. I believe that God is constantly present in our lives but we are not always receptive to that presence.

On that late afternoon in April, I was grateful for the rainbow and grateful that I was receptive to its deeper meaning. Most especially, I was grateful for the way it warmed my soul and renewed my faith in God's presence. I whispered a prayer of thanks and asked for the gift of openness and receptivity. Not expecting it to be answered immediately, I turned to leave the beach.

Galway is in the stormy north Atlantic. It was no surprise that the city placed rescue devices at strategic places along the beach. As I returned to the inn, I noticed that each weather-beaten metal rescue station was approximately three-and-a-half feet high and cross-shaped. At the center of this cross, a round lifesaver hung in a plastic house. The Christian symbolism was unmistakable, the rescue station looked like a Celtic cross.

Once again, I found a sign of divine presence. While staring at the station, I couldn't help but smile and chuckle a bit. It felt like God was being warmly playful and reassuring. As I walked away from the beach, I knew I wasn't alone.

Zen Teacher

Robert Reese

Above Zenshinji temple at Tassajara Hot Springs in Northern California, a trail narrows and climbs steeply through madrone and live oak to a memorial for the late Zen teacher, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. In ancient Greece, how a temple or shrine occupied the land was often more important than the building itself—its sacredness somehow intimately linked to the way it pointed to a distant mountain, or sat on a wide plain. The Suzuki Roshi Memorial reflects some of that same consideration. From the mesa, the hills fall toward Tassajara Creek in angular ridges, set-off by dense clumps of live oak and madrone. To the west, a thin ribbon of water slices one hundred feet between a dark wall of rock. Soon the trail disappears over a ridge. All that remains is the immense quiet and deer tracks angling off into ten directions.

Here, on a flush clearing set among wild lilac and manzanita, students of Suzuki Roshi installed a massive two-ton stone chosen by their teacher. There is also a smaller granite memorial for Dainin Katagari Roshi,

Robert Reese is lay ordained in the lineage of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and has been practicing for many years with Rev. Katherine Thanas at the Monterey Bay Zen Center. He is the director of the Carl Cherry Center for the Arts and lives with his wife and daughter in Carmel Valley, California.

another Japanese teacher who was pivotal in transmitting Soto Zen to America. With its silence and dramatic views, the narrow mesa is a living memorial to teachers and teaching.

One spring afternoon, Katherine Thanas, a disciple of Suzuki and Katagari who now leads her own practice community, brought a group of students to the memorial in a kind of obeisance to her teachers. At first, photographs were taken and the group chatted noisily as if on holiday. After a time, students put things aside and settled into the heat and silence of the mountains. A *sutra*, or teaching from the *Pranjaparamita* literature, was recited and Rev. Thanas performed a simple service.

Throughout the liturgy Katherine focused entirely on the ceremony, dimming aspects of herself except for her alertness. Silently, she approached the dark stone altar with a kind of extravagant attention, moving as if there were no other step to take. Each gesture was performed slowly, with an attentiveness that seemed to fill the small mesa and flood onto the hillside.

I do not remember what she said, but I often revisit the movements of the service that day. Katherine standing utterly still before the slanting memorial stone. Then her hands coming together in *gassho*, a sign of respect. She slowly falls in prostration to her knees, the gray robes folding into the earth, radiant and fluid in the afternoon light.

A teacher is someone we create ourselves. They are personification of our largest and most sincere aspirations as well as containers of all our cravings and limitations. Teachers—in the largest sense of the word—are a species of ontologist: their primary concern is disclosing the nature of being. If there is information or knowledge in their teaching, it is of secondary interest. The true teacher has

no polemic or rhetorical purpose. Her principal objective is the student's realization. The true teacher is one who waits outside our personal strategy, diligently watching for us to discover our original face or true nature. This is a tricky undertaking and requires the teacher not only to maintain confidence in the student, but also that the student sustain confidence in the teacher and in one self.

The collaboration between student and teacher is emphasized in a verse from the *Blue Cliff Record*, one of the three most important koan collections created and used by the Zen school for centuries.

> The Chick breaks out, the mother hen breaks in—
> When the chick awakens, there is no shell.
> Chick and hen both forgotten,
> Response to circumstance is unerring.
> On the same path, chanting in harmony,
> Through the marvelous mystery, walking alone.
> ~From the commentary, Case 16, *The Blue Cliff Record*

In the commentary Hsueh Tou continues:

"Although the mother hen breaks in, she cannot cause the chick to break out; although the chick breaks out, he cannot cause the mother hen to break in."

We can meet a teacher, but ultimately there is nothing they can give us that we don't already have. They cannot see for us. But sometimes this point is difficult to discern. We are brought up in the ethic that teachers—all teachers—are by definition wiser than ourselves.

When we meet a true teacher, when we knock on her door and she knocks on ours, she opens for us our own mind and leads us from room to room, revealing its contents and limits. Sometimes they pull the rug out from

under our assumptions about the world. At others, they are nurturing. Finally, they show us that we are the concluding authority, our own teacher. Whether we wake up or not is entirely predicated on conditions and our own effort.

The first time I saw Katherine Thanas was during a service at the Unitarian Church near Carmel, California. I was watching to make sure she remained attentive through the bows and chants on the premise that at a minimum, Soto Zen priests should preform the liturgy with attentiveness. I thought she moved too slowly, but I didn't understand the practice of Buddhism or the rituals that make it tactile.

Today, I believe she performs the service as if it were a gift or a lesson for us. As if she knew the ritual was something given her, and which she is now giving us. I have come to believe that the visceral movements during the service provide her most significant teaching. Throughout the liturgy there is a subtle exchange that transpires between the priest and congregation, but the nature of that transaction is unknowable in everyday terms.

What teachers do for students is mysterious, and does not, contrary to popular belief, have much to do with imparting knowledge. The relationship between a student and a teacher is much subtler and deeper than that, at once so elusive and radical that it seems parental. It is a teaching of example. Through the model of themselves, teachers point to elemental nature inherent in students.

"In Soto Zen, communication is life to life, living to living. That is what we learn from the teacher. We do not know what it is, because it is just living. . . The truth of living is not a technique or concept; there are no

words," writes Dainin Katagiri in *Returning to Silence*.

Buddhism is a lived teaching. It is the activity of self-awakening moment after moment. It can only be understood within the context of our own experience. Self-awakening is just that—the self awakens itself. No one does it for us. Teachers can sometimes telegraph self-awakening by example, but they cannot do it for you. In Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, a merchant asks Siddhartha what he had to share with his students. Siddhartha replied that he could think, he could wait, and he could fast. That was all he could give.

In his last words to Ananda, Buddha said:

> Be a light unto yourself; betake yourselves to no external refuge.
> Hold fast to the Truth. Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves.

Katherine Thanas is a woman in her early seventies with cropped white hair and large brown eyes that infer her Greek ancestry. Her sloping shoulders convey a bearing that speaks more of a softness to the world than steadfastness or resignation. Katherine is highly colored and individual, but she also suggests someone who has no form or color. She is a type, but she is too allusive and fluid to typecast. Except for very short hair, there's nothing initially extraordinary about her. However, when she walks into a room, you notice.

She and I meet perhaps three times a year. Not often enough. We sit knee to knee. I ask her questions. Sometimes she answers. Often, she throws the question back to me. All of the questions are a form of *the question*: "What is this? What is this life that arises before us, and what

teaches us now?"

Once during an illness that incapacitated her for months, Katherine used the infirmary as a lesson—both to herself and her students. As arduous as it proved to be, she stepped into her illness and used it as a teacher. She took on the practice of embracing the unwanted circumstances of her life and using them as a teacher.

In the Mahayana tradition the model of the teacher is rooted in the model of the *dharmakaya*, or true nature of the Buddha which is identical with the universe. From this point of view, the teacher is a vessel for the expression of the *dharmakaya*. The *dharmakaya* model is particularly useful in dealing with the humanness of teachers. In this archetype, they are like exquisite vessels with a few imperfections. Slightly marred containers of the Buddha dharma. They are perfect in their imperfection. She has cracks, I have cracks. And when we understand that we are all chipped and incomplete, we eventually see that flawless vessels cannot be found. After a time, the flaws are miraculously seen as beautiful, as extraordinary and complete just as they are. As Shunryu Suzuki wrote in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*: "We should find perfect existence through imperfect existence. We should find perfection through imperfection."

Song of Praise

Marianna Neal

I bow before You, God of wind and storm,
God of rain and snow,
Sleet and warmth.
Your earth is magnificent
Surrounding us with the beauty of Your creation.
Your handiwork reaches vast arenas of darkness
That we can barely fathom.
Your word brought forth
The tiniest insect and the largest dinosaur.
I stand in awe before You—
My finite mind cannot comprehend
Such wonder and mystery.
Earth sings Your praise.
Its hills, lakes and mountains cry out to You
As witnesses to Your glory.
To You I simply bow and say, "Amen."

Marianna K. Neal is a retired teacher who volunteers her time to the American Cancer Society. She lives in Fairborn, Ohio with her husband, Bill. They have three sons.

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